

# AVIAN INFLUENZA PREPAREDNESS

## Information for Poultry Farmers



[de.gov/birdflu](http://de.gov/birdflu)

### WHAT IS AVIAN INFLUENZA?

Avian influenza viruses can sicken poultry including chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, ducks and geese. The highly-pathogenic form of the virus is extremely infectious and fatal to poultry. There are no human health effects from the strains detected in the United States, and properly prepared meat and eggs are safe to eat.

### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

- Sudden death without other clinical signs
- Lack of energy and appetite
- Swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles and hocks
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs and legs
- Nasal discharge
- Coughing or sneezing
- Lack of coordination
- Diarrhea
- Decreased egg production; soft-shelled or misshapen eggs
- Torticollis / twisted neck

### HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Avian influenza can be spread from bird to bird by direct contact or through contact with wild bird droppings. It can also be spread indirectly through equipment, vehicles, crates, clothing or shoes.

### HOW CAN I PROTECT MY FLOCK?

Delaware farmers should always follow biosecurity recommendations, including isolating birds from visitors and other birds; keeping shoes, tools, equipment, vehicles and cages clean when entering area where birds live; avoiding tracking wild waterfowl feces into domestic bird living areas; avoiding sharing equipment and tools with neighbors; watching for warning signs of disease; and reporting sick or dead birds. Enhanced biosecurity measures include changing or disinfecting shoes between houses.

Sick or dead domestic birds should be reported to your flock supervisor or the Delaware Department of Agriculture's Poultry and Animal Health Section, (302) 698-4500 or (800) 282-8685 (Delaware only).



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Delaware is fully prepared for an avian influenza outbreak. The Delaware Department of Agriculture, in partnership with our family farmers, poultry companies, allied industry, the universities, and federal, state and local agencies, is ready to respond quickly and decisively to any finding of avian influenza in the state.

Avian influenza poses a serious challenge to Delaware's poultry sector, but our state is prepared. Our primary goals in any case are to detect, control and contain the virus; eradicate the virus; and facilitate con-

tinuity of business for flocks which are not infected. Please visit [de.gov/birdflu](http://de.gov/birdflu) for preparedness information, links to resources, and news updates to stay informed during an outbreak.

Sick or dead domestic birds should be reported to commercial poultry integrators or to the Delaware Department of Agriculture's Poultry and Animal Health Section, (302) 698-4500 or (800) 282-8685 (Delaware only). To report groups of dead or sick waterfowl, shorebirds or gulls, contact DNREC's Wildlife Section – Wildlife Disease Program, 302-735-3600.

## WHAT TO EXPECT Delaware's Domestic Bird Avian Influenza Response

**DETECTION.** We will learn that avian influenza is present in commercial flocks by either (a) reports of sick birds or (b) existing surveillance testing that is conducted on each flock. The University of Delaware's lab system provides initial testing, and positive results are sent to a federal laboratory for confirmation. Our response, however, begins immediately upon receiving a positive result from the UD lab.

**CONTROL AND CONTAIN.** Once we receive a positive test result, our teams begin notification, planning for additional surveillance testing, traffic control, permitting and other tasks. A quarantine will be issued for the affected farm, with all movement of poultry halted and other restrictions in place on movement of equipment and supplies. The control area will be a 6-mile radius from the affected farm, with farms inside that area seeing increased testing, biosecurity restrictions, and required permitting. There will also be additional surveillance outside the control area. We also will begin working with our federal partners on a disease spread investigation.

**ERADICATE.** Federal and state plans require the depopulation of an affected flock as quickly as possible to keep the

virus from spreading, carried out under guidance from the American Veterinary Medical Association. Disposal options are varied and will depend on the circumstances; typically, broiler chicken carcasses will be composted inside the poultry house. Both depopulation and disposal will be carried out by teams working for the incident response commander at the Department of Agriculture.

**CLEANING AND DISINFECTION.** Each poultry house must be thoroughly cleaned, disinfected, and tested before it can open back up to new birds. The entire process of depopulation, composting, cleaning and disinfection will take considerable time, possibly up to several months. Our goal is to open farms back up to receive chickens as quickly as possible, but we will take no chances that the virus could survive or spread to new flocks.

**CONTINUITY OF BUSINESS.** One goal of our surveillance testing is to clear the way for non-affected farms to continue their business, moving chickens out and getting new chickens in. We have thousands of families in our state that depend upon this business sector for their livelihoods, and we want to have as little impact upon their business as possible.